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Congressman

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 20, 1998

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**OPENING REMARKS – REP. STEVE BUYER  
JOINT READINESS & PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEES  
FIELD HEARING  
FT. RILEY, KS**

*March 20, 1998*

Today's hearing will provide us an opportunity to further explore and understand the Army's effort to address two of the major challenges confronting it today.

The first challenge for the Army – and here I mean the Total Army (active, reserve and National Guard) — is to find better ways to build upon the strengths of each component to produce a more integrated, a more capable and a more ready force. The rift between the active Army and Army National Guard threatens that objective. So it encourages me to see Secretary of Defense Cohen, as well as the active Army and National Guard leadership, working to find ways across that breach. To that end, the creation of two integrated divisions, each with an active Army headquarters that is directly responsible for the training and readiness of Army National Guard enhanced brigades, is a welcome, positive initiative. I am interested in helping all involved find ways to promote this and other initiatives, and to remove obstacles to further integration.

The second challenge facing the Army stems from the fact that, since 1940, it has never had less manpower. Yet, this small force remains frequently committed at rates that exceed by three and four times its Cold War operations tempo. With so few people doing so much, and with defense requirements continually exceeding the available funding, there is growing concern that the readiness of the force is slowly eroding. There are also some indications that the continuing requirement upon the force to do more with less is having a corrosive effect on the willingness of men and women to continue to serve in the military.

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As part of today's hearing, we will receive truly disturbing testimony from the General Accounting Office which paints a picture of significant manpower shortfalls in the Army's later-deploying divisions. Such manpower shortages, in my mind, add up to significantly decreased readiness.

In order to better assess the GAO findings, as well as the state of readiness in the follow-on divisions, we are using the technique of a field hearing. It's a format that both the Readiness and Military Personnel subcommittees have found useful in the past to avoid the Washington "spin" on issues and to hear directly from those people who are in the front lines of maintaining the readiness and conducting the military missions given them by the nation. For that reason, I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses, especially the commanders and NCO's who will appear on the third panel.